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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Federal Communications Commission

FROM: Bill Trevarthen, Executive Director, Michigan Government Television

DATE: August 13, 2001

SUBJECT: Reply comments in the matter of CS Docket No. 98-120

Please find attached my reply comments on behalf of Michigan Government Television in the matter of Carriage of the Transmissions of Digital Television Broadcast Stations, Amendments to Part 76 of the Commission's Rules, CS Docket No. 98-120.

Please contact me if you have questions. You may reach me at (517) 373-4250 or (517) 335-7249 (direct) or fax (517) 335-7342 or email [billt@mgtv.org](mailto:billt@mgtv.org).

Thank you.

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**Before the  
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
Washington, D.C. 20554**

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of Digital Television Broadcast Stations	)	
	)	
Amendments to Part 76	)	
Of the Commission's Rules	)	

REPLY COMMENTS OF

Michigan Government Television (MGTV)  
William C. Trevarthen, Executive Director  
111 S. Capitol Ave.,  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Romney Building  
Lansing, Michigan 48909

I, William C. Trevarthen, file these reply comments on behalf of Michigan Government Television in my capacity as MGTV's executive director on August 13, 2001, in response to the FCC's Notice of Proposed Rule Making in the matter of Carriage of the Transmissions of Digital Television Broadcast Stations, Amendments to Part 76 of the Commission's Rules, CS Docket No. 98-120.

REPLY COMMENTS: Michigan Government Television, a non-profit cable television network covering all branches of Michigan's state government, would very likely suffer serious damage if the FCC gives must carry status to every local broadcaster's digital channels. We would lose our position in the channel line-ups of many of our cable affiliates, and we would find expansion into new systems difficult if not impossible. The resulting revenue loss would certainly be harmful and could be devastating, i.e. we could be forced out of business.

Having reviewed the comments of public broadcasters to the FCC on the matter of dual or digital must carry, I am particular distressed at their statement regarding their plans to offer gavel-to-gavel legislative coverage in a number of states. The cable industry is already doing this and doing it well. It was the cable industry who took the lead in this regard when it created the C-SPAN networks over twenty years ago. It was the cable industry that started Michigan Government Television (now five years old), the Pennsylvania Cable Network, and the California Channel and

that continues to fund and support these networks. I recently joined many of my colleagues at a SPAT (State Public Affairs Television) meeting held in conjunction with the National Cable Television Association meeting in Chicago in June, and learned again during those meetings that as more and more states begin to consider or to launch legislative coverage, they look *first* to the cable industry for its support and for the most effective way of distributing this programming. Consequently, it makes no sense to pass rules that would very likely threaten the existence of cable networks already covering state and federal government (and doing a good job of it, too) in order to make room for broadcasters' digital channels that might offer similar programming but that, at this point, are merely promises.

We feel there is a compelling interest on the government's (specifically, the FCC's) part to preserve networks like MGTV in Michigan and in the many states with similar cable television networks for the public good. These networks provide a direct and comprehensive link to state governments that exists nowhere else, promises by the public broadcasters notwithstanding. The loss of MGTV or the Pennsylvania Cable Network or any other state government network would silence the voices of state legislators and leaders by denying them the chance to be heard without editing or biased analysis *now* (since it is primarily on cable networks here in Michigan and in many other states that such coverage *currently* exists.) In this sense, the loss of MGTV could be seen as an abridgement of the right to free speech.

For these reasons we are opposed to any form of dual (digital) must carry status for broadcasters' digital signals.

Submitted by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William C. Trevarthen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

William C. Trevarthen, Executive Director  
Michigan Government Television  
111 South Capitol Ave.,  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Romney Building, Lansing, MI 48909  
August 13, 2001

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